
The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear Readers,

As the air turns crisp and the warmth of Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded of the joy and importance of gratitude. The holiday season is a time for reflection, renewal, and the gathering of loved ones to celebrate both the past year and the promising new year ahead. In this spirit of reflection and growth, we are thrilled to present this month's issue of "The Lyceum," dedicated to the theme of Renewal.

This issue is crafted to enrich your journey of learning and self-discovery. Whether you are waiting during long holiday shopping trips or seeking refuge from the bustle by delving into stimulating articles, "The Lyceum" offers insights and perspectives that illuminate the Masonic path to personal and collective renewal.

Our esteemed contributors, including Darin Lahners, Chad Lacek, Bill Hosler, Ernie Miranda, Scott Dueball, and our Chairman Bernard Davis Jr., explore themes ranging from the oft-missed avenues of self-improvement to the transformative power of silence to deciphering the unique Masonic value within a song's lyrics. These curated and original pieces present various topics crafted to provoke thought and inspire action within the Masonic community and beyond.

As we journey through this issue, may it serve as a source of inspiration and motivation, rekindling the flames of knowledge and personal development as we embrace renewal. We hope you find the content engaging, valuable, and enriching, providing a beacon of Masonic principles during this season of celebration and reflection.

Thank you for joining us in The Lyceum. May your holiday season be filled with light, learning, and the ever-present pursuit of excellence.

Fraternally yours,
R.H. Johnson,

Editor-In-Chief
The Lyceum



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB: Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee

EMBRACING MASONIC RENEWAL AND EDUCATION



Greetings Brethren,

I am thankful for the opportunity to be a member of what I believe is the greatest fraternity on earth. I am also excited to share some practical ideas that each of us can implement within our lodges to promote Masonic renewal and education.

In these ever-changing times, it is imperative that we continuously strive to renew and strengthen our commitment to Masonic education. Our fraternity's rich history and profound teachings offer timeless wisdom that remains highly relevant today.

To this end, here are several initiatives that all members can adopt to enhance the educational experiences within their lodges:

Organize Informal Study Groups

Form small study groups focused on different aspects of Masonic education, such as ritual proficiency, Masonic history, and philosophical discussions. These groups can meet regularly to share insights and deepen their understanding of Freemasonry.

Develop a Mentorship Program

Encourage experienced Masons to take newer members under their wing. Mentors can provide guidance, share their knowledge, and help mentees navigate their Masonic journey. This fosters a supportive environment and strengthens bonds within the lodge.

Host Guest, Lectures

Invite knowledgeable speakers to present on various topics related to Freemasonry. These guest lectures can cover a wide range of subjects, from esoteric studies to practical skills. This not only enriches the educational content but also brings fresh perspectives to the lodge.

Create a Masonic Library

Establish a small library within the lodge, stocked

with books, articles, and multimedia resources on Freemasonry. Members can borrow materials to further their personal studies and share their learnings with the lodge.

Engage in Community Projects

Participate in community service projects and charitable activities. By actively engaging with the local community, lodges can demonstrate the positive impact of Freemasonry and attract potential new members who share our values.

Leverage Technology

Utilize digital platforms to enhance Masonic education. Create online discussion forums, host virtual meetings, and share educational content through social media. This makes Masonic education more accessible and allows members to connect regardless of geographical barriers.

Encourage Open Discussions

Foster an environment where members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. Open discussions during lodge meetings can lead to deeper understanding and a sense of camaraderie among members.

Each of these initiatives can make a significant impact on the vitality and growth of our lodges. I urge each of you to take full advantage of these opportunities and to share your knowledge and enthusiasm with your fellow brethren. Together, we can ensure that our beloved fraternity continues to thrive and make a difference in the lives of its members and the wider community. Fraternally,

WB Bernard Davis Jr,

Bernard Davis Jr

Chairman - Committee on Masonic Education
Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. M. of the State of Illinois



Silence

by WB Scott S. Dueball, Past Chairman of Masonic Education



At the beginning of Advent, we heard Luke 1:11-25 and a sermon accompanying it. In this passage, Gabriel visits Zechariah at an altar of incense. Gabriel informs Zechariah that his wife will give birth to John (the Baptist). When Zechariah

questions the authenticity of Gabriel's message, Gabriel makes Zechariah silent until John's birth.

I all but completely missed this until the sermon called to my attention that the purpose of this silence may not have been to punish Zechariah's lack of faith but to encourage him to listen. This explanation caught my attention as it is present in Masonry and many old mystical traditions. Members of the Pythagorean community had to complete a 5 year period of silence. Many Eastern and Western traditions incorporate various modes of meditation that seek to increase mindfulness of the present. As Masons, the theme of silence is prevalent throughout the degrees. Similar to the story of Zechariah, silence can be understood through a punitive lens, but I posit that the concept of listening without the burden of having to respond is of greater value to us as Masons and humans.

In the social media age, we have been given a microphone without any instruction to listen (or think)

first. I am just as guilty as anyone of feeling the need to respond to EVERYTHING. There is a fine line between things that are necessary to correct and things that likely won't be solved by offering my opinion (or even facts). We miss out on many things when we become enamored by our own words.

As we approach this season of renewal (be that Christmas, Solstice, Chanukah or any other winter celebration), let us remember to listen to the beauty of the world surrounding us. The nights are getting longer and colder, but soon the Sun will rise and give way to new beauty and warmth. Let us each commit to spending more time in silence and appreciating the sounds of yule logs crackling, children in wonder, and carolers spreading hope. Celebrate and cultivate that warmth that we, as Brethren, have the ability to share. Please pay attention to the ways in which the Grand Architect has established his greatness in our lives. The beauty of spring depends on our ability to calm our thoughts and fully embrace the winter experience.



The All-Seeing Eye

by WB James E. Frey, PDEO, IL



My Brethren, one of the most mysterious symbols within our society is the mythical All-Seeing Eye, which we receive in the third degree of the Ancient Craft. This symbol in ritual is mentioned as *“the seeing eye whom the sun, moon, and stars*

obey, and under whose watchful care comets perform their stupendous revolutions, beholds the inmost recesses of the human heart, and will reward us according to our works.” In ritual, this reminds us of our obligation to God, not in any religious context, but to the universality of God and mankind. As Masons, the eye has had many meanings throughout our rich history. However, the true understanding and deeper meaning of the Master Mason’s degree is a revelation.

Albert Mackey writes that the All-Seeing Eye is *“An important symbol of the Supreme Being, borrowed by the Freemasons from the nations of antiquity.”* The All Seeing Eye is a symbol representing the watchful gaze of God. It reminds us that every thought and action is to be recorded by the Grand Architect of the Universe and that we are bound to our obligations in spirit and blood. As Masons, we are to act upon the square of virtue and keep our passions in due bounds; that is what we swore to uphold on our honor as a man and a mason. This is the general exoteric

explanation for this symbol in modern masonry. This is because the eye was adopted into Masonry in 1797 in Thomas Webb’s Official Freemason’s Monitor. The Masons during the Enlightenment era referred to this as the Eye of Providence, which represents God’s gaze over humanity. They saw it as a symbol of the unity of religious denominations in this new era of enlightenment, which ended the Dark Ages and gave birth to modern democracy.

However, the All-Seeing Eye has been found throughout history in various cultures and societies. This, I believe, is why the Masons adopted it for this reason. For instance, Buddha is called the *“Eye of the World.”* In Hinduism, divine providence is associated with the God Shiva, who has an all-seeing third eye on his forehead that notices everything that happens in the world and has authority over death, rebirth, and immortality. Eastern meditation teachings also associate The third eye with the forehead chakra. In Medieval and Renaissance European iconography, the Eye, often with the addition of an enclosing triangle, was an explicit image of the Christian Trinity.

But within Masonry, the All Seeing Eye borrows its myth from Hebrew theology. The Watchfulness of God is demonstrated in verses throughout the Old Testament, but Mackey points to the Apocryphal Book of Conversation with Moses on Mount Sinai;

the eternal gaze of God is beautifully allegorized. *"Then Moses said to the Lord, O Lord, dost thou sleep or not? The Lord said unto Moses, I never sleep: but take a cup and fill it with water. Then Moses took a cup and filled it with water, as the Lord commanded him. Then the Lord cast into the heart of Moses the breath of slumber; so he slept, and the cup fell from his hand, and the water which was therein spilled then Moses awoke from his sleep. Then said God to Moses, I declare by my power, and by my glory, that if I were to withdraw my providence from the heavens and the earth, for longer a space of time than thou hast slept, they would at once fall to ruin and confusion, like as the cup fell from thy hand."*

This verse is pointed to because I feel it correlates with one of the most important meanings of this symbol. The All-Seeing Eye is more representative of the will of God rather than God itself. In a hermetic view, the eye dwells in the heavens, gazing over the sun and moon. But yet, it can see into the inward recesses of the human heart. This reminds us of the important hermetic lesson of 'as above so below,' which shows that the earth and the heavens are a reflection of each other and connected through the nature of God. New ways of perceiving God and man led humanity out of the Dark Ages and brought forth the Rosicrucian and Enlightenment movements. The Masons of the Enlightenment era believed it was God's will that they gave birth to democracy and the end of the feudal system. They believed Masonry was a tool for social change and social justice, to end the darkness of exploitation and the revival of the ancient ideals of the republic. This is why I believe the Speculative Masons incorporated the All-Seeing Eye as an emblem; they believed they were a working tool for the will of God.

As Masonry progressed, its focus on political philosophy faded into the esoteric studies believed to be hidden from the ordinary brethren. Illustrious Brother Albert Pike, 33, a Masonic scholar and philosopher, taught that the adepts of the order concealed the true meaning of the symbols of the craft. Yet, the true meaning of the symbols and teachings may still be discovered through the student's study and reflection. Pike writes,

"It is in its antique symbols and their occult meaning that the true secrets of Freemasonry consist. But these have no value if we see nothing in the symbols of the blue lodge beyond the imbecile pretenses of interpretations of them contained in our monitors. People have

overlooked the truth that the symbols of antiquity were not used to reveal but to conceal. Each symbol is an enigma to be solved and not a lesson to be read. How can the intelligent Mason fail to see that the blue degrees are but preparatory to enlist and band together the rank and file Masonic army for purposes undisclosed to them, that they are the lesser mysteries in which the symbols are used to conceal the truth?

Every man of high intelligence initiated of the lesser mysteries but ignorant of the greater would still have known that the former were but preparatory and that there must be someplace in which their symbols were explained and their real purposes made known."

Great thinkers within masonry pondered the teaching and mythology of the craft and began to discover deep esoteric wisdom that stretched back to ancient Egypt. This is why, within Masonry, the All-Seeing Eye is always mentioned to be of Egyptian origins. Some early Masonic writers even declared Egypt was the origin of the craft as well. It is believed the first reference in Masonic literature to that of Egypt is from the Cooke Manuscript, which reads, *"During the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt they learned the craft of Masonry... And from thence, this worthy science was brought into France and many other regions."*

To understand the role of Egypt in Masonry, one must understand the occult revival movement. During this period, the Western world was fascinated with the occult mysteries, primarily with Egyptian mythology. Groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, whose three founders, Dr. William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott, and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, were Freemasons and members of Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (S.R.I.A.) Westcott was also a member of the Theosophical Society, a mystical Christian group founded by Madam Blavatsky that dedicated itself to studying man's relation with divinity, to name a few groups. There is no doubt that during this time, Freemasonry became fascinated with the mystical and spiritual teachings of the craft and the Egyptian mysteries. Pike believed Egypt had a monotheistic religion with its source from the original concept of God, Atom-Re, which was the God of light, which generated itself from nothingness. Pike's understanding of the Egyptian mysteries came mostly from the Grecian writers, who state that Egypt utilized the mysteries for initiation into their secrets.

Pike writes,

"The candidates went through a ceremony representing this, in all the mysteries everywhere...the mysteries of Osiris, Isis, and Horus seem to have been the model of all other ceremonies of initiation subsequently established among the world's different peoples."

The Egyptian mysteries were dramatic rituals that gave the candidate an understanding of eternal life. These initiation rituals were based primarily on the legend of Osiris and Isis, which Pike believed was the source of Hiramic legend and the mystery of the master's word. This legend states that Osiris, the ancient King of Egypt, was the sun and the virgin Isis, his wife and sister, the moon. Typhon, his brother, represents darkness and chaos and plots to kill Osiris and take the throne, throwing Egypt back into chaos. Typhon traps Osiris in a coffin and throws it into the Nile, where Osiris drowns, descending to the underworld. Isis searches and finds the body, but it is stolen by Typhon, who cuts it into 14 pieces and throws them into the Nile. This act is similar to a masonic ritual where a body is mutilated if an oath is violated. Isis again searches, this time only finding one part, which is declared a substitute. Through a mystical union through the God of wisdom, Thoth, Isis, and Osiris have a son, Horus, who defeats Typhon in battle and then assumes his father's earthly kingdom.

This scene of Osiris raising is particularly interesting to Pike. Horus went in solemn procession to the grave of his father, Osiris. He opened it and called to his Father, saying: *"Stand up! Thou shalt not end, thou shalt not perish!"* Osiris awakes but only arises with the aid of the strong grip of the lion-god. He gains control of his body and is lifted from death to life. After that, by his victory over death, Osiris becomes Lord of the Land of Death, his scepter an Ank Cross, his throne a Square. This is representative of not only the true grip of a master mason but also of the perfect ashlar, which sits represented as the perfect spiritual self. Looking esoterically at the relationship between the sun, moon, and master of the lodge, one can see a clear parallel to Osiris, Isis, and Thoth and the relationship this has to that of Alchemy. Osiris, now raised, is given sovereignty over the underworld.

According to Mackey, *"On the same principle, the Egyptians represented Osiris, their chief deity, by the symbol of an open eye, and placed this hieroglyphic of him in all temples. His symbolic name, on the monuments, was represented by the eye accompanying a*

throne... which may as correctly be supposed to be a representation of a square. The All-seeing Eye may be considered a symbol of God manifested in his omnipresence."

This sense of omnipresence is interesting because we now know the All-Seeing Eye to be associated with Amun-Ra as opposed to Osiris. Amun-Ra was self-created without a mother or father; he is the light birthing in the darkness. All other Gods are seen as an extension of his being. This is how the eye is related in extension to Osiris. The Eye is also a symbol for Ra. This solar deity in Heliopolis and other areas was merged with the mythology of Horus, forming the deity Re-Horakhty, which means *"Ra, who is Horus of the Two Horizons."*

This process of light out of darkness is at the heart of Masonic teaching, and the process of ritual death and resurrection is the root of achieving enlightenment in the Masonic system. In fact, it is at the root of all our mythology and teachings. In my view, the All-Seeing Eye reminds us of our inner divinity. We are all connected through God. Through God, we understand the deep devolution and dedication we must observe daily. Always remember that we are the reflection of the universe upon itself. So, while in the gaze of the All-Seeing Eye, we must let our spirit be as pure and spotless as the white leather apron we were presented with when we first stood neither barefoot nor clad upon the checkered floor.



Since 1949, the MCME has provided a forum for sharing best practices in Masonic Education



News



**The 2025 Midwest
Conference on Masonic
Education will be held in
Indiana**

May 2 – 4, 2025



Mission

Since 1949 we have endeavored to:

Provide a communications and support network for our member jurisdictions.

Conduct an annual forum for Masons who have a vital interest in Masonic Education.

Offer the opportunity to share Masonic experiences, knowledge, and insights.

Publish occasional newsletters, communications, and the proceedings of its annual meetings.



Invitation to Join Us

Consider joining us in this work:

All Master Masons from recognized Masonic jurisdictions and Masonic-Affiliated organizations in the United States, Canada, or worldwide are encouraged to contact us and become part of our Conference on Masonic Education.

We also encourage recognized Masonic Jurisdictions to inquire on how to become a member jurisdiction of MCME.

[Join Now...](#)



About Us

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Since 1949, the MCME has provided a forum for sharing best practices in Masonic Education with each of its member jurisdictions.

Who We Are

The Midwest Conference on Masonic Education was formed in 1949 at a gathering of interested Masons from Illinois (including Alphonse Cerza) and Iowa.

The outcome was to continue getting together by establishing its first Annual Meeting which was held in December 1950 in Cedar Rapids IA. The organization is comprised of a loose and ever-changing collection of Masonic educators from Grand Lodge jurisdictions located in 12 north central States and the Province of Manitoba. Other participants frequently include chairs of Masonic Education as well as Grand Lodge officers.

What We Are About

The aim of the Conference is to promote Masonic Education, in part by providing a forum for educators to gather, freely discuss Masonic issues, socialize, and learn from sharing experiences while build-

ing beneficial relationships.

In addition, the Conference initiates special projects such as collecting data on educational practices across all North American jurisdictions, as well as encouraging Masonic research and writing by individual educators.

How We Function

The Conference meets once a year, usually in late April or early May, in one of the member jurisdictions. Responsibility for conducting the Annual Meeting rotates each year, eventually being hosted by all member jurisdictions before repeating.

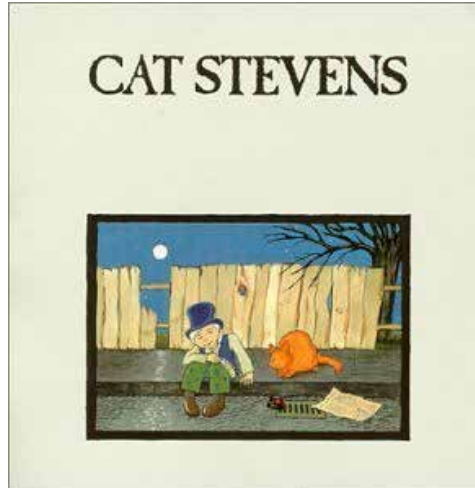
A typical program schedule includes presentations by well-known Masonic speakers, experiential as well as scholarly participant presentations, roundtable discussions, and jurisdiction reports. Sufficient time is also arranged to provide informal chats among attendees. For more than a half century, our participants have expressed the view that our Conference is well worth the time, effort and cost in order to gain the many benefits from attending and participating.

For more information visit:
MCME1949.Org

Remember - Individuals and other orgs can join, that means YOU!

Morning is Broken

WB.: Darin A. Lahners, PAEO
Committee on Masonic Education



One of my earliest, happiest memories is dancing around with my mother to Cat Stevens (now known as Yusuf Islam) album, *Teaser and the Firecat*. My personal favorite song from that album is *Moonshadow*, followed

closely by the song: *Morning Has Broken*. The song was originally published as a Christian hymn in 1931, set to the tune of “*Bunessan*,” and the lyrics were written by Eleanor Farjeon. A slight variation of the tune can be found in a 1957 anthology under the name: “*A Morning Song (For the First Day of Spring)*.” The song was popularized by Cat Stevens on the aforementioned album.

The Lyrics are as follows:

*Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world*

*Sweet the rains new fall, sunlit from Heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass*

*Mine is the sunlight; mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play*

*Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day*

*Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world*

While not Masonic at all, the lyrics do evoke the idea of the Sun's rising in the East every morning, which is implicated in the opening and closing of every Worshipful Lodge. When the Worshipful Master asks the Senior Warden: “*Why in the East?*” The answer is returned: “*As the sun rises in the East to open and govern the day, so Rises the Worshipful Master in the East to open and govern his lodge, set the craft to work, and give them proper instruction.*” It also features prominently in the duties of the Junior and Senior Warden, albeit each of them represents the Sun at different stages of the day.

The Sun is also represented by one of the Lesser Lights, which is thus explained: “*As the Sun rules the day and the moon governs the night, so should the Worshipful Master endeavor to rule and govern his lodge with equal regularity.*” The idea is that there is no creation without the union of opposites. The Sun and Moon are both required to create a new day, and the Worshipful Master is required to not only govern over his lodge but to create a new Mason.

The candidate is in darkness (representing ignorance, but also symbolically the night), and only with the help of the Worshipful Master (the Sun) rising in the east and bringing the candidate to “*Light*” does he become a Mason. The degrees are alchemical stages of purification, culminating with the Master Mason degree, where the base metal (lead) becomes a noble metal (gold), or the new Master Mason is reborn after the Symbolic Death of the old Master. This is the never-ending cycle of life, death, and rebirth, which is played out by the sun daily and will continue to be the case for approximately another 10 billion years.

It is appropriate then that the Sun and Freemasonry be so linked. The hope is that Freemasonry will be as everlasting as the Sun. So, maybe the next time you listen to “*Morning has Broken*” or witness a sunrise, you can think about these themes. The Sun is that constant hope of a new beginning or renewal of the day. So maybe it’s also appropriate that I hold dear my memories of Cat Stevens because the Sun and Freemasonry, like my mother’s love, are a constant in my life.



Behold, How Good and How Pleasant It Is...

by SK Ernest (Ernie) Miranda



“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.”

Brethren, I am a “Traveling Man” in Masonry. In speculative Masonry, we as Master Masons may freely move from Lodge to Lodge (visiting) and, upon proper avouchment or by testing, be found worthy of attending a Lodge of Master Masons. My job takes me to many domestic and international locations, and I take advantage of this opportunity to visit lodges when I can.

The one thing that is a constant within all the lodges I have visited, regardless of location, is the brethren’s concern regarding low attendance at the stated meetings.

I started this message with the passage above, which we are all very familiar with. This message I impart to you is part of a larger masonic education piece I have put together, but I wanted to share some of it with you now. My rationale for this is that the passage above is a good reminder of why we must take time to attend Lodge whenever possible.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” – We each face daily challenges in our lives, and our bodies and minds require an opportunity to refresh and renew. What a blessing to have the opportunity to meet with others in an environment free of politics, personal status, issues of the outside world, etc.! Coming together to meet as equals for the common good.

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;” – The “ointment or oil” was used for setting one apart from, and for blessing them in preparation of an upcoming task. Unity and fellowship are like anointing oil in someone’s life. The physical and mental renewal and recharge experienced by attending Lodge and being with your brethren are all-encompassing for your body and mind, head to toe!

“As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion” – Just as the dew provides moisture and reinvigorates life as it descends to the lower elevations, so does brotherly love, descending from the higher to the lower, the passing of knowledge and strength, refreshing and enlivening in the course of the gathering, and the sweet diffusiveness of brotherly unity.

“for there the Lord commanded the blessing,” – The Great Architect with these words gives strength to support to perform that which is commanded. It is good, for the Great Architect calls it a blessing.

Finally, “*even life forevermore.*” – Regeneration, which will never cease.

Brethren, ask yourself, “*Why are you not regularly attending stated meetings?*” If you think that the Lodge doesn’t miss you or that the Lodge is doing fine in your absence, remember the quote by Aristotle, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” When we connect and come together in unity, imagine what we could do rather than as smaller parts trying to accomplish the same.

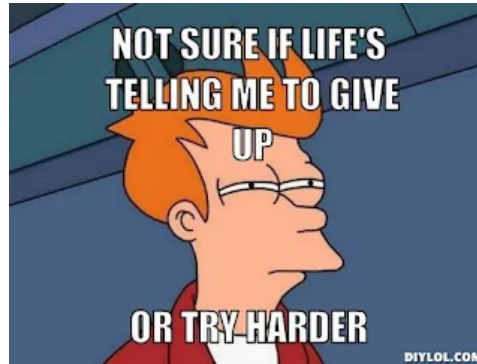
If you need help getting to the Lodge, please let a Lodge member know, and we will arrange a way to get you there. Also, if you require anything, let a Lodge member know. Brethren, look around the Lodge, look for those who are missing, and reach out to them. Ask them if they need any assistance and arrange for a visit.

May the Great Architect’s blessings be with you and yours.



Freemasonry and the Chinese Bamboo Tree

by WB Bill Hosler †



Not long ago, I saw a video of a motivational talk by Les Brown. In this talk, Mr. Brown explained how a person's life and success are like growing a Chinese bamboo tree.

The Chinese bamboo tree isn't easy to grow. For the tree to grow, the ground in which the seed is planted must be watered and fertilized every day without fail for five years, but the tree doesn't sprout until the fifth year. After those five years, the grower's patience and hard work are rewarded when the tree grows over ninety feet tall in that fifth year.

Brown explains in the video how many people will allow the tree to die because they get discouraged doing all that work, spending all the time fertilizing the soil and watering the seed without seeing any progress from all their labors. After all that time, they have spent so much doing the necessary work for the tree to sprout without seeing any progress. They begin to lose faith in the process or their abilities, or even worse, they begin to listen to naysayers, and the tree dies when they give up the hard work needed to make the tree come alive.

In today's Microwave society, where we want to start at the top of the heap and success is assured, many of us will become frustrated when the goal we want to reach or the objective we have in mind doesn't happen right away or fails to fall into place on the first attempt. Often, we get frustrated or dejected, and we begin to listen to that little voice in the back of our head, or worse yet, those who don't want us to succeed because of their agendas and prejudices. We give up and move on, and the Chinese bamboo tree

seed we planted will wither and die because we have stopped watering and fertilizing the ground in which it was planted.

Brethren, in my opinion, Masonic renewal is much like that Chinese bamboo tree. In the decade and a half since I was raised to the sublime degree, I've become interested in the Masonic renewal movement. I have worked with many dedicated Masons who put their lives and treasure into the Craft, hoping to make Freemasonry grow strong again and help it take its legitimate place in society. But I also watch them grow weary in their labors and slowly give in to the naysayers who place obstructions in their path. They either don't see the progress being made, the tree of their labors isn't sprouting quickly enough, or even worse, their skin gets too thin when dealing with those who wish the Fraternity to stay as it has for the last half-century. Sadly, they just throw their hands up in the air, leave our speculative quarries and give up on Masonry.

It's really sad for so many reasons. First of all, in just the few years I have been a Mason, there has been tremendous progress, such as the mutual recognition of Prince Hall Grand Lodges (including in many formerly Confederate states), many jurisdictions allowing business meetings on the first degree, and more Masonic education being introduced into lodge settings. In just the last decade and a half, our progress has been beyond what we thought could happen a decade ago.

The Masonic renewal movement continues to progress every year. It may not be as fast as many wish, but

progress is being made nonetheless. But if we want it to continue, we must continue working on the soil where we planted that seed many years ago.

Brethren, the Craft needs you. Each of you will continue advancing and working toward making Freemasonry strong again. Each Mason who leaves our Fraternity is one less man to work in his local lodge, mentor younger Brethren, and vote in Grand Lodge communications. As it says in the York Rite's Virtual Past Master's degree: *"From a grip to a span; from a span to a grip; a two-fold cord is strong, but a three-fold cord is not easily broken."* We are all stronger as a group than we are as individuals.

Each of us has our strengths and talents given to us by our Creator, whether you are a writer, orator, ritualist, builder, or cook...each one of us has a place in this Masonic renaissance. No matter who you are, we need you. Each of you is important and hard to replace.

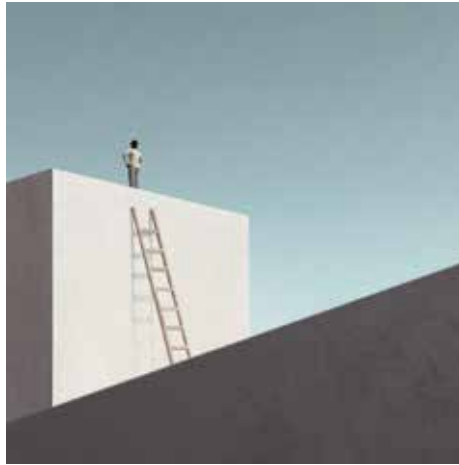
Brothers, if you know a man thinking about leaving the Fraternity, try to convince them to stay and continue their labors. Explain how they make a difference to you, the lodge and the Craft. If they have already left, try to convince them to return and rejoin us in our efforts.

If we want this fraternity to grow strong again, we need each of you, your efforts and support.



A Rebellious Path to Self-Improvement

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Committee on Masonic Education



Have you ever felt sick and tired...of everything? Tired of the same routine. Sick of living a life where the only thing that seems to change is the date on the calendar? Me too. I've heard that this condition we have is called a "Midlife Crisis."

I noticed the first signs of this phenomenon at my workplace. I can't say I ever liked it there, but I began to truly hate it. As time went by, I couldn't even pretend to give a damn and it showed. It was only a matter of time until something was going to change. Either I needed to quit, or my employer would do it for me. So, I quit. I walked into another one of those countless morning meetings, sat at a table surrounded by people I did not like or respect, and made up my mind that I would never do it again. That was the start of my rebellion.

I began to find all sorts of things to rally against. Everyone seems to be on social media, so I deleted my account. There are times when you enter an area, like an airport, where they have a large section of those belt-like ropes set up in a mouse maze. Occasionally, the line is very short, and so you are expected to walk briskly, back and forth like an idiot, through the empty part to get to the front. Not me anymore. I see commercials for new cars that have sensors in the bumpers so that the car will stop itself if you're about to hit something, and I think to myself, "*What if I want to crash my car?*"

I lived this contrarian life for a few years, and I knew it wasn't exactly healthy. Shaking your fist at the

world only gets you so far until you find yourself mad at everything. It was becoming harder to find something new to push back against. Then, one day, I found it. I found a whole new world to defy.

I was in my car, rapidly approaching an intersection on a busy road along with several other lanes of traffic when one motorist decided he was going to make a right turn from the 3rd left lane. He suddenly cut off the car next to me, and we were now on a collision course. All the rest of us slammed on the brakes and narrowly avoided a crash. Despite being entirely his fault he was angry at the rest of us, and me in particular. He waved his arms and shouted what I expected was his less-than-flattering opinion of me.

I should have been mad, even furious. I had a right to be. I was expected to be angry. But at that moment, I decided to rebel. I laughed. I smiled and laughed in an exaggerated way so that the fool who almost caused a 10-car pileup clearly saw me laughing. His change of expression revealed that it stung him, and that pleased me. It was at that moment that I knew I found something powerful. We can rebel against emotions.

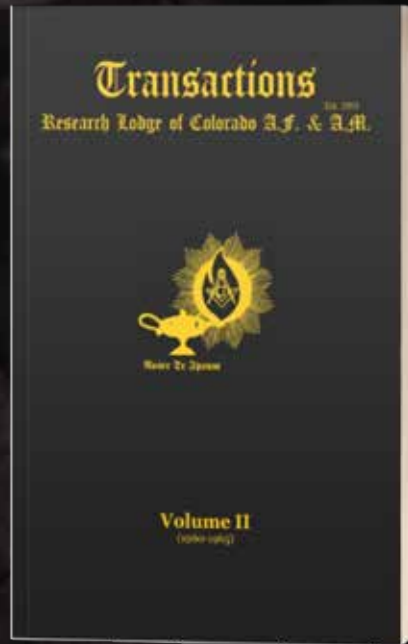
It is one thing to control our emotions or to attempt to temper them with willpower, but that's no fun. It's also tough. Viewing it as rebellion, on the other hand, is lots of fun! Try it. The next time someone does something that would ordinarily make you feel angry, hurt, or sad...Choose to rebel against it. Decide how you are going to show them they failed.

Enjoy it.

This is not the path to Temperance we are taught in our Masonic ritual, but there are many ways to get from where you are to where you wish to be. Aren't the end results more important than the method that got you there? Rebellion might be an unusual technique in pursuit of peace and self-contentment, but it's one worth considering.

I read a quote many years ago from the writer Henry Louis Mencken. He said, "*Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats.*" I understand him now. He was simply having a midlife crisis. It's OK to hoist the flag, but let's keep the knife in the sheath... for now.





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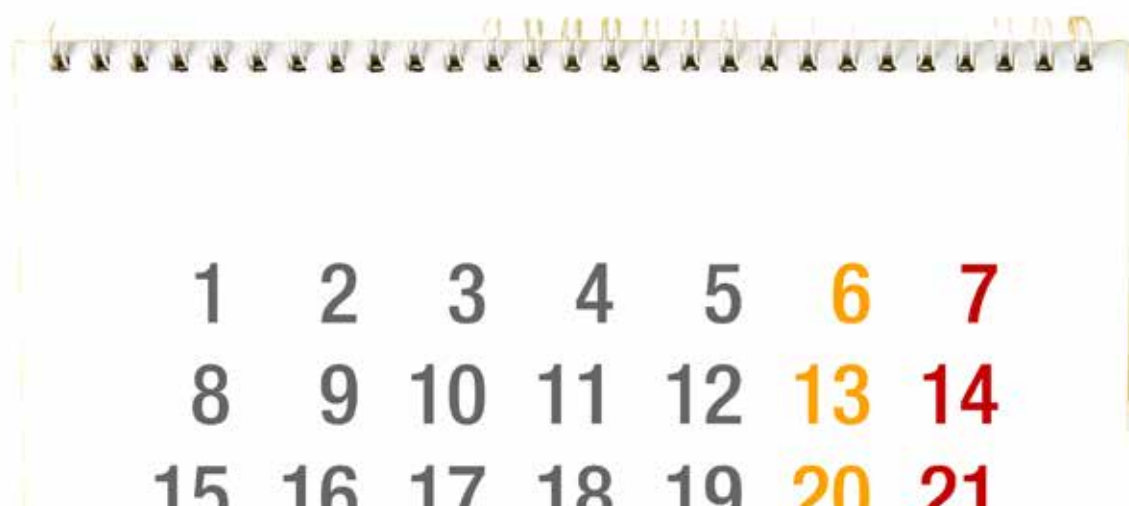
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